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An Alliterative Translation of The Odyssey Book A: Lines 1-10

An Alliterative Translation of The Odyssey Book A:

Lines 1-10

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Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ
πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσεν•
πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἶδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω,
πολλὰ δ' ὃ γ' ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν,
ἀρνύμενος ἥν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἐταίρων. 5
ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὧς ἐτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἰέμενός περ•
αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο,
νήπιοι, οἳ κατὰ βοῦς Ὑπερίονος Ἥελιοιο
ἦσθιον• αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ.
τῶν ἀμόθεν γε, θεά, θύγατερ Διός, εἰπὲ καὶ ἡμῖν. 10

Sing¹ to me, muse, of a man of many mischiefs, who made many
wanderings, since he sacked the sacred citadel of Troy: he saw the cities
of many men and marked their mindset,
he suffered such sorrows on the sea concerning his spirit
seeking to secure his own soul and the nostos of his soldiers. 5
But he could not help his hetarous, however eager he was:
for they were ruined by their respective recklessness,
hooligans, who ate the heifers of Helios Hyperion
who thus hindered the homecoming day for them.
Declain to us these deeds, as you decide, deity, daughter of Zeus. 10

1. Vocabulary according to Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, 1889, An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon. Founded upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1889). No other commentary and notes used.

1. **πολύτροπον**: ‘mischiefs.’ This somewhat archaic word was chosen both to concisely express πολύτροπον, a difficult phrase to communicate in English, and to retain the alliteration.

2. **ἔπερσεν**: ‘he saw the cities.’ The translator added this enjambment to assist the alliteration, a decision acceptable due to the poem’s pre-existing use of enjambment throughout these lines.

3. **ἔγνων**: ‘marked,’ as in, ‘made a mental note of,’ is used for the sake of concision and alliteration.

4. **πολλά δ’...γ’**: ‘such,’ instead of the more literal ‘many’ in order to keep the alliteration.

5. **νόστον**: ‘nostos,’ transliterated to avoid translating the more concisely expressed Greek term into a bulky and awkward series of English terms. The internal and the terminal ‘s’ also assist the alliteration here.

6. **ἐταίρων**: ‘soldiers,’ lit. ‘companions.’ ἐταίρων is translated as ‘soldiers’ here for the sake of alliteration.

7. **ἐτάρους**: ‘hetarous,’ here, the Greek word is transliterated solely to assist the alliteration.

8. **αὐτῶν...σφετέρησιν**: ‘respective,’ here, for the alliteration and concision.

9. **αὐτὰρ**: ‘who,’ here, to clarify the subject of this line. The extra alliteration is an added bonus of this translation choice.

10. **τῶν**: supply ‘deeds.’ ‘Deeds,’ a less ambiguous choice than ‘things,’ and additionally contributes to the alliteration.

11. **ἀμόθεν γε**: ‘as you decide.’ Difficult to express elegantly in English, this phrase is translated more literally to minimize awkward construction, convey appropriate meaning, and assist the alliteration.